United Nations DP/2000/16

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

Distr.: General
15 February 2000

Original: English

Second regular session 2000
3-7 April 2000, New York
Item 9 of the provisional agenda
Country cooperation frameworks and related matters

Assistance to Afghanistan

Note by the Administrator

Summary

Submitted on the initiative of the Administrator, the present report provides an overview of the situation in Afghanistan. It describes UNDP activities undertaken during the period 1997-1999, in particular those of the Poverty Eradication and Community Empowerment (P.E.A.C.E.) Initiative, and gives an overview of the synergy achieved through the cooperation of other participatory organizations.

The Administrator seeks the approval of the Executive Board to continue to appraise and approve projects for the next three years (2000-2003) on a case-by-case basis. The objectives and expected results of the activities proposed are described in detail in chapter III while management arrangements are set out in chapter IV.

00-30494 (E) 010300

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
	Introduction	1–2	3
I.	Humanitarian and development situation	3–8	3
II.	Results and lessons learned from past programmes and interventions	9–13	4
	A. Main results achieved as determined from the monitoring and evaluation of current programmes	9–10	4
	B. Experiences and lessons learned from past and present programmes	11–13	5
III.	Objectives, programme areas and expected results	14–22	5
	A. Objectives	14–17	5
	B. Programme areas	18–21	6
	C. Expected results	22	6
IV.	Management arrangements	23–29	7
	A. Programme management	23–28	7
	B. Monitoring, review and reporting	29–30	8
V.	Executive Board action	31	8

Introduction

1. At its thirty-first session (1984), the Governing Council did not attain consensus on the approval of the proposed country programme for Afghanistan for the period 1984 to 1986. The Council decided that the Administrator should provide continued support for ongoing projects in Afghanistan and consider for approval new projects consistent with the rules, regulations and normal criteria of UNDP. At subsequent sessions of the Council and of the Executive Board (most recently at the second regular session of the Executive Board in 1997), the Administrator was authorized, in the absence of a country programme for Afghanistan, to provide continued support for ongoing and new projects in Afghanistan. The current arrangement has been approved until the end of 1999.

2. As a result of continuing civil strife in Afghanistan, it is not feasible to formulate a country cooperation framework at this juncture. The Administrator therefore seeks the authorization of the Executive Board to continue to appraise and approve projects for the next three years (2000-2003) on a case-by-case basis, consistent with the rules, regulations, guidelines and normal criteria of UNDP. The strategy for future interventions is described below. When conditions permit, the preparation of a country cooperation framework will be initiated.

I. Humanitarian and development situation

3. Afghanistan is a country in deep crisis. Twenty-one years of continuing conflict have led to the total collapse of local and national institutions of governance, have devastated the economy and have shattered community cohesion as well as the basic productive and social infrastructures. For the past several years, Afghanistan has remained at the bottom of the human development index. During recent years, the Taliban movement has expanded the territory under its control to approximately 85 per cent of the country. However, neither a military nor a negotiated settlement of the conflict seems within reach at present.

4. The human rights situation continues to deteriorate in all parts of the country and policies of gender discrimination are pursued, particularly in Taliban controlled areas. Areas of the country suffer from food shortages. Basic health, education and other social services have collapsed or are extremely precarious at best. Traditional coping mechanisms and the remnants of pre-war civil society have been profoundly affected. Females have unequal or no access to those rudimentary health and education facilities that remain and have to endure the additional trauma resulting from family loss, conflict and discrimination. Although an estimated four million refugees have returned, more than two million remain in neighbouring countries, and half a million have been internally displaced in the latest few years. Unemployment has reached enormous proportions; practically the only reliable employment at present is either as a soldier or in the criminalized economy created through the production and trafficking of narcotics and through smuggling.

5. The complex reality of Afghanistan escapes easy labelling. It mixes a volatile and violent political crisis, a human rights and humanitarian emergency and two decades of missed development opportunities. The fragmentation of the country and collapse of practically all institutions of the state, also constitute an emergency of governance.

6. In this context, the attention of the international assistance community has turned more towards the need for programming with adherence to common principles and common objectives. In the absence of a traditional programming dialogue with, and direction from, a national government, the UNDP programme, like other programmes of the United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Afghanistan, is based on the tenets of the Ashgabad International Forum on Assistance to Afghanistan (January 1997) i.e.: (a) peace-building should be the overriding objective of all assistance; (b) a comprehensive and long-term approach was required for integrating humanitarian, rehabilitation, development and human rights activities; and (c) working with Afghan civil societies, at the community level, was — in the current circumstances — the best option. In this vein, a strategic framework for assistance has been agreed on by the assistance community and serves as the overriding programming guide, outlining common principles and objectives.

7. Coordination within the assistance community has taken large steps forward in the period 1997-1999, in accordance with the strategic framework and

principled common programming process. Incorporating the entire international and national assistance community, several coordinating bodies have been established, including the Afghanistan Programming Board, thematic working groups at the national level, and regional coordination bodies. In support of these ground-breaking, comprehensive efforts, UNDP has joined forces with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan. The Humanitarian/ Resident Coordinator, who is also the UNDP Resident Representative, leads the coordination work and the joint office supports the coordinating bodies mentioned above as well as the preparation of the Consolidated Appeal. Within this office, special advisers for human rights and gender have been fielded, supported by UNDP and servicing the international and national assistance community.

8. In a meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group held in Ottawa, Canada from 8 to 9 December 1999, donors heeded an appeal for more donor funding to be extended to longer-term activities that would enable Afghan communities to become more self-reliant. Strong support was expressed for the UNDP programme, which combines the strengthening of local governance with immediate rehabilitation activities.

II. Results and lessons learned from past programmes and interventions

A. Main results achieved as determined from the monitoring and evaluation of current programmes

9. During the period 1997-1999, UNDP delivered substantial assistance through a major programme with a vision for community self-reliance, named the Poverty Eradication and Community Empowerment (P.E.A.C.E.) Initiative, incorporating five major rehabilitation and development components, as well as significant coordination-support activities. As well as utilizing carry-over resources from the fifth cycle and core resources from the financial cycle 1997-1999, the programme has been able to attract significant cost-sharing and parallel financing. Evaluation missions in 1998 and 1999 concluded that despite a number of constraints, the programme has been a fruitful undertaking in delivering an impressive package of assistance. In particular, the thematic evaluation in 1999 stressed the role of this programme as a set of area-development schemes, one of the few realistic options to fill the gap where social and economic structures are in ruins and government institutions in a state of collapse. Some specific achievements noted were:

(a) Forming the basis for self-reliant, sustainable rehabilitation and development, intensive community mobilization work has set up and/or empowered 2,100 community organizations and special interest groups (including women's groups) in rural and urban areas;

(b) In primary education, a pilot project has been established and has opened 15 community schools for boys and girls;

(c) Basic and specialized social services have been delivered to over 34,000 disabled persons (35 per cent women);

(d) Safe drinking water has been provided to over 14,000 households;

(e) Locally owned and administered revolving funds for micro-finance have been established and are fully functional in 85 communities;

(f) More than 40,000 metric tonnes of quality seeds were multiplied and distributed inside the country. Along with the provision of training, extension services and fertilizers, it is estimated that the total wheat yield gain from this input is 250,000 metric tonnes;

(g) Fruit-tree nurseries were established, producing enough saplings to plant 6,000 hectares of orchards;

(h) Twenty-five million animal vaccinations or treatments were administered, estimated to benefit one million livestock owners.

10. In relation to the work done by the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative under the programme on the empowerment of communities, the 1999 evaluation concluded that actions at the level of local communities at this juncture offer the best prospects of addressing some of the most difficult issues confronting the country, such as human rights observance, gender discrimination, environmental decline in rural and urban areas, and the expanding cultivation of opium poppy. Directly engaging rural and urban communities and civil society

affords the best chance of making a difference by creating capacity among communities to help themselves. Furthermore, it can help to lay the foundations of self-government by reviving and fostering traditions of local governance.

B. Experiences and lessons learned from past and present programmes

11. Overall, the 1999 evaluation concluded that programme methods and approaches are sound. Considerable synergies have been created, not only through the cooperation of participating organizations but also with organizations operating outside the programme framework. Collaborating organizations at various levels have included the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat), the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and a number of national and international NGOs. As detailed in the evaluation report, a valid contribution is being made to combat widespread rural and urban poverty. Communities are being mobilized for self-help along different tracks and their organizations should be allowed to develop their potentials. Different methods are being tested, opening up livelihood opportunities.

12. Among the beneficiary communities, social processes have been set in motion that create new coping mechanisms and enhance resilience. These capacities for community participation and organization should be further built on with the aim of making them fully sustainable in the long term. From the donor perspective, the programme offers them an established operational link able to give effect to longer-term development strategies and a ready management and technical capacity for delivering sectoral programmes in specific geographic areas.

13. In conclusion, the 1999 evaluation recommended that the programme should be carried forward for another two-year period. In this connection a number of associated recommendations are made to strengthen and revitalize the effort. These relate to such subjects as impact indicators and the introduction of more structured monitoring, in a qualitative sense, of cross-cutting operational approaches, such as gender differentiation, community organization and income generation, targeting the most disadvantaged groups of Afghan society.

III. Objectives, programme areas and expected results

A. Objectives

14. In the Strategic Framework jointly agreed to by the assistance community, the following key objectives have been set out: (a) the alleviation of human suffering; (b) the protection and advancement of human rights, with particular emphasis on gender; (c) the provision of basic social services; (d) the empowerment of Afghans, both women and men, to build sustainable livelihoods; and (e) the return of refugees from neighbouring countries.

15. To contribute to a return to normalcy through these objectives, UNDP must continue a two-pronged approach: (a) focus its developmental activities to strengthen coping capacities and stabilize communities by seeking to maintain productive endeavours and social services and restoring governance and (b) strengthen international cooperation for sustainable human development and help the United Nations family to become a unified, powerful force for human development.

16. The overriding goal of the UNDP programme for the period 2000-2002 is to contribute to the realization of the aspiration of the people of Afghanistan for peace and development in a collective, self-reliant and sustainable manner, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable. This requires an emphasis on: (a) community empowerment through enhancing people's capacity to organize themselves into viable and just communities for self-reliant development; (b) human welfare through improving the welfare of the population, the most vulnerable in particular, by strengthening the capacity at the local level to create and manage infrastructure, strengthen food security and improve income generation; and (c) governance by enhancing sustainable community-based development

by strengthening capacity and the enabling environment at relevant levels for good governance.

17. The 2000-2002 programme, in its re-articulated objectives, stresses the importance of processes of interaction and advocacy with communities on gender and human rights, and of the establishment of mechanisms where communities can advocate confidently for policy change. This will ensure the emergence of an environment where activities which move gender concerns can be gradually and openly undertaken. Each of the programme components has defined, in its own project framework, one or more success targets in this area. Apart from this new focus in objectives, two programming aspects will be stressed in the next phase: (a) the systematic appraisal — and impact assessment — of all project interventions from a gender perspective and (b) a quarterly review, at the programme-manager level and with the participation of the United Nations Senior Adviser on Gender, of major successes and failures.

B. Programme areas

18. While maintaining the overall, programmatic objectives described above, the programme is, for practical reasons, divided into the five sub-components described below.

Strengthening community self-help capacities in rural Afghanistan and rebuilding communities in urban Afghanistan

19. The emphasis of these components is on activities that improve the living conditions and human welfare in rural and urban areas in a sustainable manner. This includes a number of small-scale interventions to improve infrastructure as well as interventions in health, education, shelter, water and sanitation and the creation of income-earning opportunities. However, the success criteria, and thus impact targets, will also focus on the extent to which participatory development takes place and the degree to which benefits accrue to women, the poorest and the most disadvantaged in particular. The central elements of these components are the involvement of civil society organizations and capacity development: community organizations participate in the full range of interventions from needs identification, through implementation, to post-programme sustenance of activities.

Food security through sustainable crop production

Livestock development for food security

20. The emphasis of these components is on improving food security and livelihoods through increased agricultural and livestock production. Success will be achieved by strengthening local capacities (at the district, village-cluster and village level) for self-reliance in these sectors, in particular with respect to access to technology, inputs and services. Activities include training of the local private sector, non-governmental sector and contact farmers, farmer groups, and livestock owners in agricultural and livestock techniques through efficient extension services. Support will also be provided to local communities and community groups to enable them to become self-reliant in the production, management and dissemination of essential agricultural inputs.

Comprehensive disabled Afghan's programme: integration of the disabled and marginalized

21. The emphasis of this component is on ensuring the integration of disabled people, widows and orphans into mainstream development and programme activities through a number of well identified and targeted support activities. This includes, *inter alia*, overcoming constraints through special credit programmes, disability support instruments and income-earning opportunities. An overriding goal is to involve community groups in the design and implementation of integration activities, ensuring a community-based rehabilitation approach and thus empowerment of the target groups.

C. Expected results

22. The programme is expected to have the following results:

(a) Community organizations established at the local level to undertake development activities and promote good governance. Capacity developed within these organizations to mobilize resources and manage them in a sustainable manner, to undertake activities that contribute to meeting the essential needs of the people, and to have an advocacy role for individuals and communities;

(b) Improved access by communities to physical and social services and infrastructure and strengthened capacity of the communities to manage them. Essential community-level infrastructure rehabilitated and sustained. Food security strengthened at both household and community level. Conditions created to increase licit incomes and provide employment and economic development;

(c) New partnerships developed by communities with private and non-governmental organizations. Capacity of both communities and public institutions strengthened to develop mutually supportive relationships for self-reliant development. Capacity of community organizations to undertake advocacy for human rights strengthened.

IV. Management arrangements

A. Programme management

23. The programme is designed to focus its range of components on certain selected districts. This is done to create an area rehabilitation and development effect by addressing several types of needs in the same communities simultaneously. Through this approach, synergies are created and impact on one specific target population is maximized. This approach has also helped to provide a forum that works towards principle-centred common programming, by linking the principles with field experience and insights. Within each district, a lead agency will be designated, further enhancing integration of the efforts. The programme will also continue to work closely with the regional coordination officers appointed by the United Nations Coordinator. For the focus districts, the compilation of baseline data and the establishment of a set of relevant impact indicators will allow a results-based approach to interventions across the programme.

24. In reaching out to new districts, care is taken to build step-by-step on the successful investments in the original district. In exceptional cases such as vaccination of animals or improved seed development the activities are designed to benefit the whole country. In addition, some areas of special interest have been selected by a wider group of organizations in an attempt to embark on development activities with a specific focus, for example from the perspective of refugee return or the reduction of opium production. Here, the programme plays a pivotal role in providing a broad base onto which more specialized components can be added.

25. Finally, there is an emphasis on the sharing of premises, vehicles and other services among the partners of the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative. In particular in remote field locations, this type of cooperation has high value, allowing a wide range of interventions that otherwise would not have been possible.

26. The focus of national capacity-building within the programme is on local community organizations. In Afghanistan, strong, traditional structures for consultation and governance exist on the local level, both in rural and urban areas. In some instances, the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative strengthens existing mechanisms, mobilizing community groups and organizations as interlocutors, negotiating partners, implementers, monitors, etc. In other instances, where the level of deterioration in social structures so requires, the programme assists in creating new consultation and governance structures, either as broad, inclusive groups, or as special interest groups, for example for the disabled. There are a number of examples of successful capacity-building that have enabled communities to continue with self-implemented activities by drawing on their own resources, with no further support from the programme, or by serving as interlocutors for future interventions from other external assistance organizations. The very coping mechanism that a viable community fosters can also be the foundation for sustained peace and development.

27. In implementing programmes in the field, national NGOs have been used to a significant extent. Over time, this has led to the establishment of a strong cadre of qualified implementing partners, who, it is envisaged, could form the basis of private service providers and contractors in the future. In some instances, technical departments associated with local authorities have been involved in the implementation of activities. While great caution has to be exercised, considering the political situation, the potential value of keeping a minimal technical competence intact in local government departments is high.

28. The programme employs a large number of national staff at both the professional and support levels. Considering the country situation, the development of such staff is seen as an important contribution to national capacity-building. As the

programme moves towards more delegation of responsibility in the future, the impact of these efforts will become even higher.

B. Monitoring, review and reporting

29. In the course of the first six months, and every six months thereafter, a review will be made of project progress and achievements, to facilitate deliberations on the future focus of activities, future funding and any necessary changes. Such a review will emphasize: (a) programme impact; (b) enhanced coordination and synergy within the programme; (c) enhanced coordination with common programming initiatives; (d) mobilization of funds; (e) extended partnerships.

30. Considering the strong recommendation of the 1999 thematic evaluation to strengthen the measurement of programme impact, a detailed set of indicators will be designed that will focus on the following programme components:

(a) Community organization:

(i) Structure and management system in place as per adopted methodology;

(ii) Type and range of services established and in operation over a specified period;

(iii) Financial self-sufficiency;

(iv) Employment generation;

(v) Partnerships established;

(vi) The needs of women, the poor and the disadvantaged addressed;

(b) Human welfare (disaggregated by gender, widows, internally displaced persons and refugees):

(i) Access to water, sanitation and health services improved;

(ii) Access to health and education improved;

(iii) Food security strengthened;

(iv) Protection against epidemics enhanced;

(c) Governance (relating to local community organizations):

(i) Participation in community consultations strengthened;

(ii) Arbitration cases undertaken;

(iii) Transparency systems in place;

(iv) Participation of women increased;

(d) Programme and project management:

(i) Islamabad-based project units restructured;

(ii) Regional and local cross-programme team leaders designated;

(iii) Resource mobilization undertaken;

(iv) District team functioning;

(v) Impact indicators designed and in place;

(vi) Self-evaluation system in place.

V. Executive Board action

31. The Executive Board may wish to:

Authorize the Administrator to continue to approve projects for Afghanistan on a case-by-case basis for the period 2000-2003.